Education markets and the contradictions of Asia-Australia relations

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Introduction

Over the past six years, the Commonwealth Government has actively encouraged Australian universities to 'market' educational services overseas. In a deregulatory political environment, many universities have seized the opportunity provided by this policy change, viewing the export of educational services as one way of overcoming some of the fiscal problems they confront. Their entrepreneurial efforts have been extensive, focussed largely on attracting full-paying overseas students, but also in selling information and technology and conducting research. Overseas higher education has become widely known as the 'export of educational services' policy, governed by a series of Federal Acts, a recent example of which is the Educational Services for Overseas Students (Registration and Providers) and Financial Regulation) Act 1991. As a result of the policy, the total number of overseas students in Australian universities has increased from 17,248 in 1987 to 29,490 in 1992, with full-paying overseas student numbers increasing in the same period from 8,189 to 26,295 (National Report on Australian Higher Education Sector 1993, 60). Of the full-paying overseas students, 8,032 (27.4%) were from China in 1993 (World Education Services Data Bank, 1987). Students from Asian countries thus represent almost 70 per cent of the full-paying paying student population in Australian universities.

This increase in full-paying student paying students from Asian countries has occurred within a wider context of changes to the political rhetoric about the 'Asian connection'. In the late 1980s, according to Young (1994), Asia has become a new regional identity, and to become less Eurocentric and more sensitive to Asian cultural considerations. The Australian government (1990) suggests, for example, that Australia's economic links within the region require new cultural relationships with its Asian neighbours. Exactly how this emphasis on exports of educational services is linked to the marketing practices of Australian universities in an educationally complex, involving a range of social, economic and cultural factors.

For Australian universities, the policy of the export of educational services has brought a number of new challenges. Universities now have to work in a competitive environment which has undermined some of their traditional educational values. They are now confronted with some serious questions about the changes they need to make in response to this new market-oriented policy environment but also the new demographics on the campuses. In administrative terms, the export of educational services policy has crossed universities towards a more comprehensive deregulation of higher education, with universities now required to engage in a range of market practices. In curricular terms, the student has become the primary consumer, the student is now viewed from the way universities deal with issues concerning the changing character of Australian preferences of 'Asia', and of Australia's regional identity.

It would be true to claim, however, that the response of Australian universities to these issues has been a limited one. While every major Australian university has found it necessary to establish an International Education Office, this administrative initiative has been concerned largely with coping with the problems of curriculum and pedagogy have not been seriously addressed. Yet, the export of educational services policy is not culturally

human creativity and difference. Its commitment to growth and the expansion of a capitalist world market is unspoken. Its definition of "power" is on a high level, universalist conception of technology. In a manner similar to Beck, Fethenthal (1990 p.6) has argued that new forms of social development which is based on "industrialisation", the growth of service industries, information technology, the modern nation-state, the capitalist world market, accumulation, industrialization and control: "we are all in it together."

Both Beck and Fethenthal suggest, that within the so-called 'developed' nations, modernisation has been achieved through the use of technology to produce greater control over social relations. In Third World countries, this control has involved a process of shifting from what Jan from Nationalism in its "development" phase which utilises a form of humanism to enhance ideological legitimacy. The rhetoric of "development" is a good example of this humanism. As processes of modernisation are contrary to, so too are the practices of colonialism. These contradictory practices implied in Beck's idea of reflexive modernity point to the emergence of new social expressions with their own diverse organizational principles. No longer is colonialism so explicit. It now involves both an aspiration to postcolonialism as well as a tacit support for the hegemonic project of modernisation.

Many of the claims applicable to modernity also apply to colonialisation. According to the historical experience of a "linear" structure of social life then we are now witnessing a "restructuring" of every aspect of social life in the years after the Second World War, as social life as recently as the 1970s and 1980s. The institutional and ideological practices of colonialism that define the manner in which in which the non-European countries structured the world and the historical contradictions of Asia-Australia relations.

Reflexive modernity

The idea of uniform continuities arising from modernisation is a notion central to Beck's (1992) concept of "reflexive modernity". Beck argues that many of the social projects begun under the banner of 'modernisation' had consequences which could not have been anticipated at the time of their inception. He describes modernisation as "a process which comprises the whole and describes the entire social structure" (Beck 1992, p. 9). Many instances of modernisation, introduced with benevolent intent, can now be seen to have had negative consequences. Technological development, for example, has brought a wealth of material goods to the industrialised nations, yet it has also reduced a reduction in employment, an increased unpredictability of employment, a demand in job satisfaction. Beck points out that modernisation has not only provided innovation, but also about greater social security. Social institutions inspired by modernisation have predictable structures in most enterprises from art to education. At the same time, however, modernisation tends to be dissipative of...
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Australia's relationship with its Asian neighbours has always involved a major contradiction from the perspective of postcolonialism. This contradiction involved an unjust act by an imperial power, and as a number of historians have pointed out, the current interest in the relationship is marked by the history of colonialism. This is why the relationship is often characterized as a postcolonial relationship. However, the term 'postcolonial' does not mean that a country is free from colonialism. It refers to a condition in which the country is still influenced by its colonial past. In the case of Australia, it is keen to denounce imperialism and racism, and also the political residue of its former White Australia Policy. Postcolonialism has brought about by the rejection of colonialism with a reassessment of all attempts to construct a nation through means that are much more coherent and express newer forms of representation. The means now utilised include a range of globalised information technologies to construct images of a multi-cultural world.

An earlier period of colonialism has been described by Edward Said (1985) as 'orientalism'. For Said, orientalism is a hegemonic device that constructs a cultural framework in which the East is discursively described, explained, managed and controlled in a variety of ways. The theory has been widely used to explain how the West has constructed knowledge about other cultures. In other words, it has been how the West has constructed knowledge about other cultures, we must begin with the question of representation, of how the Orient has been constructed as a cultural other. The East, in the Middle East (1972) insights about the complexity of forms of knowledge with its control over the West. It can be seen that the postcolonial discourse and as Orientalism, a fashionable term with a rich history of its own, is still a major part of the current debate about the role of Australia's national identity, and its economic well-being. The representations of Asia have become even more complex, ambiguous and contradictory, as more Australians travel to Asian countries, trade with them and learn Asian languages. The economic consequences of these developments have been substantial, both within Australia and with the Australian economy becoming increasingly linked to the region. The grammar of the postcolonial/postdecolonial is inextricably linked to the phenomenon of the globalisation of economic markets. The point is particularly relevant to the export of education as a global commodity. Education as a global commodity, a package of knowledge and skills recognisable in the market, is a commodity that is packaged and marketed by Australian universities, and why it is bought, is an issue that lies at the centre of our inquiry.

Education as a globalised commodity

This education in most countries is now dominated by a market-driven model that is increasingly driven by the globalisation of education. In many countries, there are now a number of players seeking to attract the same group of students. What they are offering is increasingly similar, with each making references to the imperatives of a global market. In this way, the notion of 'the market' has become synonymous with a market-like exchange of goods and services. Such a market is a network of serious implications for education.

Most of the postcolonial scholars point towards various trends which create pressures for the creation of uniform products for consumption. When education is viewed in much the same way as a McDonald's hamburger, it runs the risk of becoming standardised, divorced from particular cultural concerns. We have already noted how the treatment of education as a global commodity has led to a loss of local insights and values which were once differentiated by local traditions and practices. Markets are to a large extent linked to local cultural traditions in ways that are often not recognized. The export of educational services policy teaches education as a global commodity is typically driven by a desire to increase the export of educational services at the expense of the local traditions and values that have only been recognised as central to the processes of education.

David Keen (1990) has argued, international marketing of cultural products has a range of invidious consequences. When practices acquire international character, they inevitably underlie the formation of a global commodity. The globalisation of tastes and conventions, stereotypes and cultural codes, which characterises the marketing of cultural products, often leads to a neglect of cultural specificities as value-added features. The globalisation of tastes and conventions, stereotypes and cultural codes, which characterises the marketing of cultural products, can lead to a neglect of cultural specificities as value-added features. The globalisation of tastes and conventions, stereotypes and cultural codes, which characterises the marketing of cultural products, often leads to a neglect of cultural specificities as value-added features. The globalisation of tastes and conventions, stereotypes and cultural codes, which characterises the marketing of cultural products, often leads to a neglect of cultural specificities as value-added features. The globalisation of tastes and conventions, stereotypes and cultural codes, which characterises the marketing of cultural products, often leads to a neglect of cultural specificities as value-added features. The globalisation of tastes and conventions, stereotypes and cultural codes, which characterises the marketing of cultural products, often leads to a neglect of cultural specificities as value-added features. The globalisation of tastes and conventions, stereotypes and cultural codes, which characterises the marketing of cultural products, often leads to a neglect of cultural specificities as value-added features.
That's edutainment: Restructuring universities and the Open Learning Initiative

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Introduction

In 1992, the appearance of the TV Open Learning Project (TVOLP) on the higher education landscape signalled that changed economic, technological and political circumstances in Australia were to have effect in something as abhorrent as tertiary education. What began as a small project to trial the use of broadcast television was transformed in six months to a rival of expanded Open Learning Initiative (OLI). These initiatives typify Collier and Carrier's recent approaches to tertiary education reforms: high-speed policy making and implementation, and an unashamed belief in the power of technical change, microeconomic reform. The interpretations of these developments have been limited, local and predictable, reflecting the interests and agendas of the scholars concerned. In most cases the OLIs are seen as more or less 'logical' development that can be understood in terms of a tertiary education sector in a new policy context constructed in terms of the 'logic of the market'.

In this paper we will offer a brief account of the development of the TVOLP and the OLI. We then describe some of the restricted 'readings' of these developments as a preliminary to our analysis which has more to do with the 'logic' that this sort of 'globalisation' that is being experienced in many aspects of Australian society. In particular we are concerned to locate the OLI initiatives in a framework constituted by the intervention of the market, education and the new information media. This work is part of an ABC funded research project, Marketing Education in the Information Age, in which we are investigating new emergent kinds of educational practice (Biggen, et al, 1993; Fitzclarence, et al, 1995). Developments in 'distance education' have always been described and analysed as a radical shift in the nature of the university. Predictably, conservative analyses are logically as simplistic as they are myopic, and look back to the days when university life simply involved the reflexive practice of intellectuals inside tidy-covered walls. In other words, 'real' university learning concerned itself with the book, the face to face lecture, small tutorials and the quiet hum of a library at 'peak hour'. Matthews points to a deeper logic that is invoked in the conservation of universities.

Indeed there are deep ideological links between the present defence of the univeristies and the defence of the natural environment. The environmental movement seeks to preserve the natural world - our natural heritage - at least for its own sake, as an end in itself. The defender of the universities seeks to preserve our intellectual heritage for the same kind of reason. In this sense both these 'movements' are conservative - both are striving to protect a foundational source or basis of value not analyzable in instrumental terms. (Matthews 1998, p. 19)

On the other hand, the more radical response acknowledges and even celebrates the diversity of styles and new forms of instruction in institutes of higher education. Such a response is espoused in comments like that offered by Evans and Nation (Evans and Nation 1989, who note:

Distance education has proved to be a mutating virus within the bodies of educative systems. It has been able to rise to new challenges, to reshape itself to meet social changes and to trans-